PS
1085
B423W

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

WORDS OF THE WOOD

WORDS OF THE WOOD

by

Ralcy Husted Bell

FRANCIS JONES '05

OTHER BOOKS BY DR. BELL

THE WORTH OF WORDS

Hinds & Noble, 1904

SONGS OF THE SHAWANGUNKS

(*Out of Print*)

AALA DEENE AND OTHER POEMS

(*Out of Print*)

WORDS OF THE WOOD

By

RALCY HUSTED BELL

Boston
Small, Maynard & Company
1906

Copyright, 1905, by
Ralcy Husted Bell

Published, December, 1905

Press of
George H. Ellis Company
Boston, U.S.A.

PS
1085
B423W

DEDICATION

TO

FREDERIC HENRY GERRISH, A.M., M.D., LL.D., PORTLAND, MAINE.

My dear Doctor:

An appropriate dedication is a difficult thing to write. It should be done under the most favorable conditions. Even then the result is not always felicitous. Now that the time has come for me to avail myself of this privilege, I am glad that you are travelling abroad, because your absence allows me greater freedom, as it were, than your characteristic reserve would permit if you were here.

I am thankful for this opportunity to do homage to your broad culture in my own way, and to signify my appreciation of the special attainments of your eminent scholarship. Certainly, you are not unaware of my admiration for you as a successful Teacher, a great Surgeon, a learned Anatomist. I wish you to know, as well, of my high regard for your splendid character as a man, and especially of my profound esteem for you as a loyal friend.

A dedication ought to *mean* something; and this one does. It is symbolic of a long and beautiful friendship which began during my college days in our relations as Professor and Student,—a friendship which time has strengthened, which unselfishness has sweetened, and which only death can end.

Compared with what I might say, very justly, I feel that I am conservative in my expression of your worth. On the other hand, I am conscious of saying much more than your modesty will approve. I rely on my sincerity to shield me from your frown. Good intention does much to smooth the way in this world, even as it is alleged to pave regions nethermost in the next.

Trusting that it may never be the lot of either of us to test the accuracy of the allegation, I remain

Your sometime student and
friend always,

R. H. BELL.

New York, Sept. 5, 1905.

904068

CONTENTS

	Page
Words of the Wood	1
In a Deserted Garden	2
In the Wildwood of the World	3
The Land of Fern	4
Dawn	5
Dreamland Voices	6
Wild Flowers	7
A June Song	8
Benevolentia	9
The Maligned World	15
May Twenty-seventh	17
Stay thy Hand	19
America	20
A Sketch	25
Edmund Clarence Stedman	26
Lines	27
To a Friend	27
Herbert Spencer	28
The Light-house	29
John James Ingalls	31
The Pale Horse	31
To a Dead Man	33
Marooned	34
Robert G. Ingersoll	35
Walt Whitman	36

PAGE

Beauty's Slave 38
Birthday Blossoms 39
A Song of the Sun and Dew 40
My Helen's Eyes 41
Song of a Starling 42
Kisses 44
Late Summer 45
A Handful of Clover 45
Even So 46
A Love-queen 47
One Clinging Hour 48
Kathleen 49
Requital 49
A Rose Song 50
Night in the Park 51
Violets 52
A Smile of Autumn 52
Love's Star 53
A Man's Marvel 54
Sixteen 55
Fate 56
A Ballad of Change 57
Doubt 61
God 62
Life 62
Alone 62
The Spirit of Democracy 63
The Middle Ages 64
War 65

PAGE

A Cry of the Soul 66
The Absolute 69
False Fame 69
On Sliding Ground 70
My Soul Awakes 71
The West Wind 72
The Soul's Harkback 72
A Vision of Life 74
The Negro 75
United. 76
Dreams 77
Yesterday 78
Dead Sea-fruit 78
De Po' Li'l' Chil'un 81
Leavin' Georgy 82
Goin' Back to Georgy 84
The Cross 85
When Day Droops 86
The Truly Free 86
Love's Largess 87

WORDS OF THE WOOD

I know a wild-born instinct of the wood
  Where tangled vine and woven branches are,
Where fern and flower beneath the feet are good,
  And sheltering leaves sift light of moon and star.

I know the longing love for druid trees
  Where shadows droop when all the boughs are still,
And all the gloomy ways where Fancy sees
  Her bathing Fauns in every pool and rill.

Within my soul the woodland voices rise,
  Like echoes down the years from long ago,
Until my heart is full of forest cries
  Of every note from mirth to savage woe.

My wistful gaze is set on some far glade,
  Deserted long by time and vanished tree,
Where I may dream at noontide in the shade,
  And hear no sound save wing of droning bee.

My love undaunted is as forest life,
  And longs to wed as once the Satyrs did:
Woo fleeing Nymphs on fleeter foot 'mid strife,
  And pause to pluck fierce pleasure, leafy hid.

Ere man conspired with time to mar the world,
  The mystic woods were fain to nurture me;
In that dim age my joyous soul is furled,
  And slumbers yet wherever grows a tree.

IN A DESERTED GARDEN

In this hard age of steel and stress,
'Tis good to sit in some old garden spot
Beside a quiet lane,
Where modest plants in breeze caress
Each other's leaves when days are long and hot,
And blossoms dream of rain.

'Twere well to watch the little things,
That live their lives far from the world apart
And know not of its ways.
'Tis good to feel the thought that springs
From out the leaning lily's stainless heart
On peaceful summer days.

The lichened stones have tales to tell;
The garden wall knows many legends, too,
Of hearts now silent dust.
The grass-grown path that finds the well
Is still writ o'er with stories strangely true
Of love and faith and trust.

The moss-rose bush neglected seems,
As though it held some bursting heart too full
Of memory to speak.
The comely rambler droops and dreams
Where crumbling arbor-cords no longer pull
Up tendrils that are weak.

Once-trodden spots where children's feet
Knew all the thrills of summer's touch of earth
Are grassy now and green.
The boughs where lovers' lips did meet—
Where heavenly passion had its human birth—
Are dark with death between.

The tea-plant and the tamarack,
The hollyhocks and timid violets,
Half-hopeless seem to wait
For friends, ere ruthless Time's attack
Had left them there where sleeping love forgets
To pass the garden gate.

But still the birds nest in the briar;
And still the rose's heart bursts sweetly red
Where greenest ferns grow tall.
Good Peace, at least, a lonesome friar,
Says dewy beads for both bereft and dead—
And stars shine over all.

IN THE WILDWOOD OF THE WORLD

Often waking from the vaguest depths of night,
I have felt her measured breath upon my cheek;
Often walking in the woodland's checkered light,
My soul was thrilled with music as I heard her speak
Of the little mosses dreaming all alone
In their humble nooks, or crannies of a stone;

Of the leaning little flowers
That were wooing in the bowers
Of the tangled wildwood of the world,—
In the blessed wildwood of the world.

So through many a night of slumber her sweet breath,
Like a mystic cadence kissed of quiet rest,
Lulls my soul to sleeping, to my spirit saith,
Peace and love are fairest in the humble breast,—
Like the gentle mosses dreaming all alone
In their timid nooks, or crannies of a stone;
Like the leaning little flowers
That are loving in the bowers
Of the tangled wildwood of the world,—
In the sleepy wildwood of the world.

THE LAND OF FERN

I know a land where simple beauty dwells
In all the blest perfection of its power,
Where viewless sculptors carve the bud that swells
Each springtime into song of leaf and flower.

I know a land where fruitful waters flow
Adown the rocks to kiss the feet of hills,
Where beds of moss hold dreaming things that know
The secret plan of ferns, and birth of rills.

I know where stones have lips of velvet, soft
As lovers' lips that part and speak and press;

I know where silent prayer is raised aloft
From rootlets to the boughs that winds caress.

I lose myself in shadow where the trees
Expand their leaves to light of sun and star;
I barter self where kiss of fluent breeze
Is fraught with fragrance whence the balsams are.

I lean beneath the birch in reverent thought,
I kneel beneath the oak in thankful prayer,
And feel a spell the sacred wood has wrought
On living things that love it everywhere.

I spend long hours of rapture with the fern,
Amazed to think its primal image wrought
One changeless plan through countless forms that turn
Not from the Artist's proof of living thought.

I know the secrets of the mystic wood
Where light-kissed gloom releases fair design;
I feel the touch of silence that is good,
And find that peace of heaven which is mine.

DAWN

Now the trees awake in murmurs to the winds that
softly blow,
Hail some vague and hidden fancy, that their pulses
dimly know.

All the smiling grasses bending, under splendid jewels seem
Half-way conscious of a dawning, as if waking from a dream.

Woodland flowers turn their faces faintly from the scowling West,
As if seeking smiles and kisses, just as children do at rest.

And the shaded mosses tell me they, too, dream of coming day,
Though their timid hearts more slowly thrill to dawning's paler ray.

Happy ferns of countless tracings, standing by the marshes' edge,
I am certain hail the promise of the golden day-god's pledge.

All the meadow's swaying censers, all the highland vines that cling,
Somehow sing the spell of morning sweeter than all poets sing.

DREAMLAND VOICES

Now sings the mated bird,
Scarce knowing why he utters golden mirth.
The thrilling leaves are stirred
With melodies of bird and sky and earth.

From far-off fields of sleep
I hear the drowsy phantom voices rise.
There are no winds to sweep
The misty murmur-echoes from the skies.

Serene soft stars eclipse
Their full-eyed gaze with lids of love half closed;
The great world gently dips
Beneath a sea of azure, opal-rosed.

The half-wake grasses droop
Where pools of moonlight lie between the trees;
And tall night-shadows stoop
Like timid silence shrinking from the breeze.

WILD FLOWERS

Beyond the daily paths of men, afar
From rutted ways and dusty barren streets,
I know where children of the wildwood are,
Whose fragrant souls the dewy morning greets.

These modest dreamers, long ago, have won
My spirit back to simpler days when flowers
And love were one, when woodland poets spun
Their tinted lays of sweetness from the showers.

I live again with these in forests wild,
Where loam is dark, and mosses green are laid
Beneath the feet; where all the air is mild,
And gladness dwells in every nook and glade.

I wander there in freedom fair and sweet,
  Content to give my soul to them and take
Their dreaming odors fresh from colors fleet,
  And hold them in my heart for beauty's sake.

Ah, happy children of the happy wood!
  'Tis blest to know you now while love is wed
To life; and yet for widowed love 'tis good
  To feel your presence still when life has fled.

A JUNE SONG

I loaf away long summer days
  Where wild hares have their burrows;
I dream all day where the woodchuck stays
  'Mid clover fields and furrows.

I love the bees in the linden-tree
  When the linden leaves are sunny,—
The grass to my knees like an emerald sea,
  And the bees all making their honey.

I like to swim where the silverbugs skim
  The pools of the creek a-creeping
Up close to the brim of the fields where slim
  Old poplars lean a-sleeping.

I tarry long where the skylark's song
  Rises up from the fields like a spirit,
Swift as the song of an arrow strong,
  And fades away as I hear it.

I haunt the spring where the wild birds sing
To dewy blossoms of glory,
Where harebells swing and mosses cling
To branches gnarled and hoary.

And I loaf and lie where grasses high
Are sweetly cool and shady,
Where earth and sky conceive and die
In the arms of me and my lady.

BENEVOLENTIA

I have robbed my garden of roses red
And lilies white for the graves of the dead.

I have plucked from my lips their sweetest smile,
And bestowed it where everything else was vile.

I have treasured my noblest words to give
Where serpents of thankless hatred live.

I have grown most glorious grapes, and made
A nectared vintage to drunken a jade.

I have burdened my heart and lightened my purse
In barter for bruises bestowed with a curse.

I have patiently woven my dream-wefts rare
To brighten the walls of my lady fair;

And my choicest woofs were torn in strips
By the words with claws which leapt from her lips.

I have strewn at the feet of the great and wise
My dearest possessions beneath the skies;

And they trampled them down, and never gave heed
To the ruin they wrought by the callous deed.

I have given with never a thought of return
Fair gifts, which were taken with cool unconcern.

I have shown sweet mercy to mean things with life,
And spared most contemptible creatures in strife;

But they answered my mercy with venomous stings,
In perfect accord with the mean human things.

I have spared my foe, when the battle was mine,
Who had sought my blood with malicious design;

I have spared him the thrust of a mortal fight,
To be struck from the back in an ambush of night.

I have answered with softness the hisses of rage;
And impudent questions of fools, as a sage.

Without profit my answers! no surcease from pests
In a universe managed by savage behests!

I have read the books of the wonderful men
Wherein *feeling* was slain for the love of ken.

Again I have seen where feeling was crazed
In the books of men with intellects dazed.

I sorrowed and felt quite equally sad
At *feeling* run riot as *knowledge* gone mad.

I have builded my hopes of blood and sweat,
And labored from dawn till the sun had set;

From dew-wet eve till the stars went out
At dawn again with never a doubt.

But my labors were vain as the vainest call
That ever the human lips let fall;

And my hopes all died as each thing dies
Till my Soul grew weary, and dim were my eyes.

My Soul crawled away—as a hurt thing crept
To the hollow of night—and my spirit wept.

Alone I wept through the mortal years,
Little knowing the fount of my falling tears.

I thought I was weeping o'er graves of the dead
'Mid lilies white and roses red.

I dreamed I was mourning my sweetest smile,
Which was wasted where everything else was vile.

I grieved for the noblest words which I said,
Where the serpents of hatred flourished instead.

I believed that my glorious grapes that made
A nectared vintage were lost on a jade;

That my largess of heart and gifts of purse
Were bartered alone for a bruise and a curse;

That the wefts of my Soul, with its tapestries rare,
Were lost on the wretch who seemed so fair;

That the great and wise by a callous deed
Had wantonly made my heart to bleed;

That my gifts were taken only to spurn
The spirit of giving that craved not return;

That the mercy I showed to the weak and mean
Was the weed that was left where the sickle had been,

And the foe I had spared from sword and lance
Was spared by my folly or favored by chance;

That the legend of answers which turn away wrath
Was invented by Satan to trouble my path;

And that books of men were a fatuous waste
Of clean white paper and boards and paste;

That my hopes were crushed,—by a demon done
To their death in a cruel burst of fun;

That the world was a sham 'mid pitfall and fell,
And that life was mere savagery, heartless as hell.

. . . . . .

But at last I awoke, and knew that my tears
Were not for these through the mortal years.

For my *Soul* I had wept,—my Soul that had fled
And for many a mortal year lain dead.

I opened my heart where the hinges grate
(For the rust was deep on the unused gate).

I opened my heart where the flood-gates are,
To let in the light of sun and star.

I opened my heart with a fervent prayer
To the spirits of light and the voices of air,

To the smiling nymphs of a new-born day;
And they brought back my Soul from the far-away.

It came from the far-famed Kingdom of Love,
New-risen, song-laden of stars from above.

And I saw my white lilies and roses red
Entwining the brow of my loved and dead.

I saw that of which all else had been vile
The foul was made chaste by my sweetest smile;

That my noblest words to hatred and spite
Had changed their serpents to flambeaux of light;

That the jade who was drunk on my nectared wine
When human was now a woman divine;

That my largess of purse was a debt I had paid,
And my gifts of heart came back as I prayed;

That the wefts I had woven of patience and trust
Were scantily ample as shrouds for my lust,

And the treasures I'd cast at the feet of the wise
Were never beheld by their wistful eyes;

That mercy was justice deferred too long,
And meanness was weakness ere weakness grew strong;

That the foe I had spared was a friend in disguise,
Who struck without light in his darkened eyes;

That answers of kindness to hisses of wrath
Are the blossoms of glory that border my path;

That the book was as great as the soul of the writer,
And the thought more strong than the arm of the fighter;

That dreams are as real as the action or deed,
And faith more holy than preachment or creed.

Thus *feeling* and *knowledge* were squared by the rule
That came not from men and is taught not in school.

And the hopes I had buried with sighs and tears
Were the frailest desires of the mortalest years.

. . . . . .

And this I have learned, as all men must
Some time 'twixt birth and crumbling dust:

That whoso does his best e'er saith
The noblest prayer this side of death;

That he who has somewhat and somewhat gives
Holds that in trust whereby he lives;

That evil for good is a fiction of night,—
For all things are good by their ultimate right;

That he sins who sorrows for personal pain,
Since the wounds he receives are his measure of gain;

And the culprit who slays is the victim he slew,—
For this my enlightened Soul told me was true.

THE MALIGNED WORLD

How good the world is never has been told.
  The fashion is to rail against its sin,
  Decry its evil ways, augment its din
With platitudes on "useless hoarded gold";
But I am with those cheerful souls who hold
  That good is everywhere, that love has been
  The savior of our race, our souls' trust in
All noble deeds 'twixt star and earthly mould.
I see in country spots ten thousand sweets
  Which bloom perennially the glad year round;
I see them throng the crowded city streets;
  I hear the swelling pæans rise and sound
In rhythmic cadence of the heart that beats
  With good in everything above the ground.

. . . . . .

How glad the world is never has been said.
So prone are we to sing of grief and tears
We scarcely note the passing, playful years,
But dwell within their graveyards where the dead
Unhallowed hopes of yesterday are wed
To solemn phantoms born of dread and fears,—
While ancient memories are all one hears,
As though time's flight had ceased, and joy were fled.
But we who walk with hope on either hand,
And clasp with kisses close all joys between,
Behold a smiling, flowery, fairy land,
Where gladsome spirits dance 'mid leaves of green,—
See joy in everything and understand
The saving grace of humor's happy mien.

. . . . . .

How true the world is never has been sung.
We celebrate its hoary lies too well:
Preach rambling doctrines red with flames of hell,
And mystic nightmares old when earth was young;
Ignore the truth to which our souls have clung
With patience greater than a god could tell,
And sweet as all the passing years could swell
From fair cathedral chimes by angels rung.
I know how deep truth lies in humankind;
How goodness grows on every spot of earth;
How gladness sows its seeds in every mind,
Brings forth its flower and fruit in endless birth;
How all the cordial virtues unconfined
May dwell in every heart, on every hearth.

MAY TWENTY-SEVENTH
(1905)

Lord God of Nations, Judge of valiant deeds!
  Spirit felt,—half-seen along the sky,—
Spirit or Shade or Fate! the world's heart bleeds
  For strong men drowned, for men who groan and die.

Yet mute we stand beside the eastern straits,—
  Deep admiration burns the soul like flax,—
We see no widow far away who waits,
  Nor feel the woe that melts her heart like wax.

We only hear great Togo's sea-dogs bay,—
  Firm-fixed as rock, we watch his fierce ships turn
Their deep-mouthed guns on ships like potter's clay
  Which break and sink, or limp o'er waves and burn.

We see the Silent Admiral, calm and still,
  Where mighty engines belch their flame and shell,
So like a god, since all obey his will,—
  Both men and iron ships 'mid flames of hell.

We see our tawny Sister, Nippon, sweep
  The eastern seas stark clean of Russian boasts,—
If we have any woman's tears to weep,
  Be they the tears of joy at scattered hosts!

Be they the tears that leave the eyelids free
  For clearer vision of the deeds that won
Unbroken victory on land and sea
  Beneath the hallowed flag of the round red sun!

Be they the tribute tears for Nippon's dead,
  The holy dead who gave their lives for Him
Who is of Nippon, heart and soul and head:
  Colossal Spirit of her ages dim!

Be they the tears that flow for wounded right,
  Long patient with the savage, snarling beast
That knows no higher law than brutal might
  Of fang and claw which threatened all the East!

Be they the joyous tears that wet the breast
  Of homing heroes laurelled from the strife,—
Sweet tears of this great Sister in the West,
  All jubilant at Nippon's larger life!

And yet, O God of Nations, Judge of deeds!
  While mumbling oaflets count their endless beads,
Poor peasant Russia, ox-like, dumbly bleeds,
  Oppressed by sottish power and sterile creeds.

O Thou who art the spirit of the earth,
  Whose awful shadow looms along the sky
When furious battle moans in giving birth
  New life to nations, list to those who die!

Give balm to orphans' woe and widows' tears,
  And peace to spirits fled of all who fought;
Give nobler ethics to the newer years,
  And freedom from the chains that folly wrought.

If Freedom, Peace, and Progress follow fray,
  And might grow merciful with growing power;
The sad world welcomes this sad crimson day,
  And worships Nippon's sun this bloody hour.

STAY THY HAND
(1898)

Fair land that rolls from sea to sea!
  Prairies fringed with palm and pine!
Thy mountains mingle mightily
  In clasp of ice and kiss of vine.

Broad seas of meadow daisy strewn,
  And winding vales caressed by streams,
And timid valleys green as June
  And sweet as childhood's happy dreams,—

O peaceful land from tide to tide!
  O home for millions yet unborn!
Oh, what would you of oceans wide,
  And what would you of bugle-horn?

United States,—war-won and made
  Of internecine strife and tears
One blood, one flag, one damask blade,—
  One comrade-hope to greet the years!

Lift thou, O land, thine arm no more!
  Put thou the kingly crown aside;
Bare thou the blade our fathers wore
  To guard thine own where thine abide!

Thou hast no need for navies strong,
No need for martial captains bold!
Thy strength resides in ploughman's song
Far more than all thy yellow gold.

Smite not the lowly tribes that raise
Their swarthy hands in Freedom's name!
Think not that holy men will praise
Thy creed of might, thy banner's shame!

The puny glory won of tears,
From gory crimes of war and death,
Is dead to praise through all the years
And doomed by mercy's faintest breath.

Then sheathe thy sword from tropic isles,
And proudly thou let heroes hold
Dominion where the far sea smiles
'Round homes peace-won of thy red gold.

AMERICA
(1904)

Around the great round world thy pennants fly.
The broad seas' breast hath felt thy loud guns' voice:
Its resonance hath kissed the shore and sky
Till foes cried, Peace! for lack of other choice.

Day follows night as thy swift eagles soar.
Thy banner's shadow gives thy sons their light,
As powder-flash foretells the cannon's roar,
As sun-dawn greets the day in eager flight.

Thy breast hath reconciled the songs of May
With Winter's wail. Strong life hath smiled in thee,—
Strong breath of God, and spirit of the day,
And deepful breathings of the Western Sea.

Thy deeds are deathless as th' immortals are.
Thou hast the splendor of great dreams that dare
The fate of oceans wide 'neath cloud or star,—
Thy battle-line hath swept thy foe-line bare.

Yea, Life hath smiled in thee, and thou hast smiled
Upon the world. Thine eyes have heart to face
All foes of liberty that may be filed
Along the world in wide skies' huge embrace.

Thy brow is brave enough to frown on all
The hateful acts of man. For thou art great
Among thy sisters,—great and proud and tall,
Within thy mien the face and front of Fate!

Yet two things menace thee, O Land of Corn
And Cotton! These things be the crimes of Cain
In great south gardens, sweet as breath of morn,
And evil plottings of thy sons for gain.

These twain cry loud to pierce thy human ears
With human wails escaped from red throats hoarse
From calling down the cruel, callous years,
And answered only by the lash of force.

These twain are piteous from lips dark-skinned,
  And sad as grief from whiter sons of toil
Who suffer north and south, forever sinned
  Against by soulless greed and lords of soil.

Look forth upon thy future, O proud Land,
  With faith and hope! and in thy gardens south
Protect thy dusky ward with thy right hand!
  His soul hath hungered greater than his mouth.

Go make his ways as flowery as thy fields!
  For thou art God-like in thy strength and power.
Go wipe the stains, that Crime's red harvest yields,
  From off thy shield! Stains mar it at this hour.

Within thy gardens south thy sun-kissed ward
  In pity's name holds out to thee his arms.
Be brave, O Soul, as he who was thy lord
  And master-spirit, sane in war's alarms.

Between thy breasts thy sons of toil rebel,
  Who, stronger grown, have now some faith in life.
The time approaches when the battle-yell
  Shall sound again in fields all red with strife.

Be thou their friend: too long have they been banned!
  Breathe courage in their heart and strength in arm.
Great Soul, lead thou the way of wisdom planned,
  And guide thine own from Mammon's mortal harm!

And when thy weaker weanlings question thee,
Or pule at courage shown in cause of right,
Smile thou in pity, and thy purpose be
Unswerved. Oh, falter not in thy stern might!

They shout, "Imperialism!" yelping tikes,
Or sucklings blind to thy far destiny!
They know not when some great occasion strikes
The clarion word to man imperiously.

They see no law of growth in thy out-reach,
No wide beneficence to all the race.
They only hear thy strong-winged eagles screech,
They only see the frown upon thy face.

But there be those who see behind thy frown,
And hear the songs that follow scream and strife.
Upon thy Jove-like brow they see no crown,
But only laurels of intenser life.

This must be clear to thee, O Queen, who art
The chosen one of world-wide destiny:
Thy duty is allwhere, in every mart
And clime where heart hopes for fraternity.

Dear Titaness, outgrown of sterile forms,
Aflush with newer life that thrills thee through,
Thy brow hath nobler courage than the storms
That thunder down the world, and threaten you.

Without, thou hast no fear of any foe,—
  Within the danger lies, if any be.
Then teach thy sons the word that they should know,—
  The love that sanctifies and sweetens thee.

America, we pray the watch of night
  Be passed, and thy clear vision sees afar.
Dear God of Peoples! thrill thy soul aright,
  And keep thy purpose true as any star!

For thou art unconfined between the seas
  By musty doctrines worn away by years.
Thou hast the power for good,—the good that frees
  Thy Sisters' sons from caste and cruel tears.

Dear Prophet-Queen, and Mistress mightier yet
  Of realms all white with snow, and tropic isles,
And seas and plains, and uplands granite-set!
  Thy commerce kisses, and the round earth smiles.

Thy commerce kisses,—kisses blossom sweet
  With bloom of Art,—and subtle Science brings
Her trophies fair to lay them at thy feet,
  While on thy brow the living laurel clings.

Thy fervor feels this iron age of might
  Amid the moving tide of worlds on fire;
But in thy breast the sacred dreams of right
  Are strong in ways aflame with sweet desire.

Great love, great faith, not loathing hatred, thine;
Nor yet unfaith in least of all life's kin!
Unfurl thy flag, and let its white stars shine
Where hope and spiritual glory have not been.

Unfurl thy flag! unbend its crimson bars
Upon the winds of heaven, floating high
Earth's symbol of her Sisterhood with stars,
One brotherhood for all beneath the sky!

The God of Nations beckons thee afar:
Thou hast grim missions yet ere flag be furled,
Beneath the glory of thy fadeless star
Upon the federation of the world.

A SKETCH

(C. O. M.)

To say a man is faultless bars the way
For saying of him many better things.
The man is perfect, then, I will not say;
But I aver that some Good Angel sings
Within him purer strains than men control,
And from the Angel's song awakes his soul.

For he is just; and justice is a song
That steals within the heart all unaware,
To whiten it from stain of mortal wrong,
And consecrate the thoughts that blossom there,—
A conscious song, that, like some fairy wraith,
Is alien to the world as Doubt to Faith.

Unselfish as the bloom when down the wood
The breath of spring foregathers sweets to fill
The world with fragrant song; so kindly, good
Is he to all his fellow-folk; and still
His generous heart has that whereof to give
Fair largess to the meekest things that live.

His honor was not born to need defence,—
"Four square it stands to every wind that blows,"—
A mountain peak that scorns all small pretence,
And smiles in pity on the thrusts of foes.
A man of pride,—nor yet too proud to bend,—
Thrice grateful for the chance to serve a friend.

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN
(AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY)

His brow bears up the drifts of winter snow
Like some bold headland towering toward the sky.
He looks adown the world where harbors lie,
And sees the burdened ships that come and go.
He hears the whispering wave-lips murmur low,
And all the loud-voiced breakers riding high.
To him a fallen leaf now floating by
Is fraught with meaning full as stars may show.
And far across the land where human cries
Are blent with happy voices soft and sweet,
Where joy weds grief in highways of surprise,
Where flowers melt in fragrance, all too fleet,
Unto his soul each spirit-echo flies
With song, and drops a blossom at his feet.

LINES

In presentation copy of
"Ballades: Les Rayons et Les Ombres," HUGO.

When frost is in the air
  And day is gray as grief,
Look not on branches bare,
  For here are songs in leaf.

And here are fragrant things
  That breathe the soul of light;
And here mysterious wings
  Bring shadows from the night.

The Master touched all strings
  That thrill the harp of thought;
And still the echo rings
  With music he has wrought.

And still rejoicing years
  Shall know the measure sweet
Of sun and shade, of tears
  And joy he made complete.

TO A FRIEND

Over the world where blossoms foam,
  Or on the sea-blown billows white,
In every clime where you may roam
  In pulse of day or heart of night,

Through time of stress or stormy weather,
'Mid hours of song and sun and leaf,
May garnered joy and golden sheaf
Yet speak of days we dwelt together.

For Time hath teeth with which to gnaw,
And Fate assumes mysterious guise
Of Chance and Change and clasp of law
We feel, but see not with the eyes.
Still mayest thou keep through shifting weather,
Whate'er the seasons be of soul,
Beneath the sky's inverted bowl,
The first fair dreams we dreamt together.

HERBERT SPENCER

Above the world in thought he stood on high
But yesterday,—a towering, conscious peak,
A giant lone, titanic, great and meek,—
The sole Victorian shaft against the sky.
He looked afar, and measured with his eye
All depths and heights that the immortals seek,
All fancy-flooded realms, and facts that speak
In divers tongues of truth that few deny.
Now lies he low; but whence so long he stood
At thought's high tide ascends a pillared flame.
He sleeps! And may his dreams be sweet and good!
Large-lettered on the dome of day, his name
Shall live for aye. Within the solemn wood
Of Highgate Hill his dust endures with Fame.

THE LIGHT-HOUSE

(TO EDITH CASKEY COOPER)

O'er the waves a light is gleaming,
  Rising from a reef,
Like a soul in darkness beaming
  On a sea of grief;
On a rocky shore as lonely
  As the sea-caves are
Stands a light-house shining only,
  Shining like a star.

And my eyes are wet with weeping,—
  Weeping for the drowned;
While upon the rocks are creeping
  Waves of hollow sound,
Wolfish billows that are blinder
  Than the corpse below,
Cruel waves, yet not unkinder
  Than some hearts I know.

All the night the light is streaming
  From a tower of gloom,
Like a midnight watcher dreaming
  In the face of doom.
All night long it watches, turning
  Ever round and round;
While its fiery heart is burning
  Through the breakers' sound.

And my heart has less of sadness
  As the rays illume,
Warning sailors of the madness
  Known of reef and spume.
For my soul through years of dreaming,
  Watching for the light,
Sees at last a beacon gleaming
  On the shores of night.

Serene, the Soul's prophetic token
  Flashes in a look,—
Not the hollow promise spoken
  In a creed or book,—
But the secret of our seeing
  Sweeps the sea afar
From the light-house of our being,
  Shining like a star.

O'er the waves a light is gleaming,
  Rising from a reef,
Like a soul in darkness beaming
  On a sea of grief;
On a rocky shore as lonely
  As the sea-caves are
Stands a light-house shining only,
  Shining like a star.

JOHN JAMES INGALLS

(IN MEMORIAM)

Now long ago,—for I have heard it told
  How yesterdays are ancient as the sun,
  And how they rob to-morrows, one by one,
Of joys; how moments fled are dead and old,—
So long ago I stood beside this bold
  And fearless man. I touched his hand that none
  Unknown to shame had feared. 'Twas then begun
My love that deepens as the years unfold.
O sorrows infinite that smite the breast
  Of finite consciousness! The moan and wail
Of grief are sombre birds, that never rest
  While throbbing darkness beats and waves assail
The wreckage ever rudderlessly pressed
  To unknown tides 'neath stars that fade and fail.

THE PALE HORSE

And at my door the pale horse stands
To bear me forth to unknown lands.

JOHN HAY.

There in the gloomy midnight
  With all the stars asleep,
Beneath the floating rivers
  That cross the mystic deep,
The pale horse pawed and whinnied,
  As restless as the sea,
To take a great soul forward
  From where it loved to be.

Before "The Fells" at midnight
The pale horse pawed and neighed;
But only the shadows saw him,
And only the shadows made
The sign that he was present,
And deaf was mortal ear
To prancing hoof and whinny
Of the pale horse waiting near.

The stirrups swayed at midnight;
A clear-eyed spirit strode
The charger pale as morning,
And bravely away he rode.
He took the path that mortals
Begin when Day is done,—
A path for his great spirit
To hills beyond the sun.

In deepest gloom of midnight,
Through vales of quiet sleep,
He left the kisses of children
And laurels for wife to keep.
The horse was pale as moonlight
That bore his honored name,
With love of home and country,
To higher hills than Fame.

From sombre pines at midnight,
Across New Hampshire hills,
A faint breath floats and kisses
The half-mast flag it thrills,

And tells a grieving people
  Of the pale horse in his flight
That bore a splendid spirit
  Away from earth at night.

TO A DEAD MAN

On the hillside, in the quiet, from the world apart,
Resting in the sombre, silent shadows after life,
Sleeping in the solemn memories made of weary strife,
We have left him as we laid him with a wreath above
  his heart.

All the trees had hushed their murmurs in the grave-
  yard where they stood;
All the grasses, like sweet children under sorrow's
  early blow,
Joined the silence of the mourners, drooping sadly,
  seemed to know
What the leaves lost in the forest, why the stillness
  of the wood.

We were children then beside him, and the eldest of
  us felt
Helpless, hopeless, in the darkness there, though
  highest stood the sun.
And we marvelled at his stillness, that his active
  life was done,
And the mystery of his manner rose triumphant as we
  knelt.

On the hillside, in the quiet, at a peaceful place,
Resting in the sombre, silent shadows after life,
Sleeping in the solemn memories made of weary strife,
We have left him as we laid him with a smile upon his face.

MAROONED

Long, long ago I prayed to God,
Prayed as a little child on bended knee,
In the same sweet fervor, love, that I give to thee
My whole heart now, and through the long night's sleep wherein thy dreams are one with blossoms rooted in the sod.

Yes, once I prayed, and now I pray no less,
Because my love for thee takes all my speech,
Even as no space too distant is beyond the reach
Of God's great laws. So are the harmonies of thee which search me through until my very soul forgets that aught else may bless.

I watch the red sun rise above the sea,
Far out beyond the marshes' level rim
Where the cool mists mingle and make dim
The ships, so like the phantom memories and hopeless dreams and shifting mysteries (forever in my brain) of thee.

Beyond the great hills in the West's embrace
I see the sun sink low in golden sleep,
While all the warden stars come out to keep
Their watch upon the world, as if to seek the rare
beauty of thine eyes, and smile upon thy face.

And here upon the marshes in the night,
I know that I am long marooned by fate,
Broken with weariness and cold, to watch and wait
For the slow dawn to break in glory of love's perfect
day, the perfectness whereof shall be thy image
to my sight.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

We kiss the urn that guards his sacred dust;
With reverent lips we press the speechless urn;
We kiss our shrine, and clasp it as we must,
For on life's road it marks the stop or turn—
We cannot say which 'twas—the Master made.
We only know his god-like presence there
Was touched to smile, and waft a kiss, and fade.
Some think he journeys on, and some declare
It is the end. But we who loved him so,
And stood like children at his knee to hear
The golden words, confess we do not know;
And yet our love and hope out-wing all fear.

This much we know: whate'er the seasons be
Of soul beyond our straining, tear-dimmed sight,

This blessed man is Prince of Joy; that he
Who made of clay and tears and laughing light
The tenderest memories of adoring wife,
The sweetest dreams that children ever knew,
And charmed with friendship's mantling love the life
Of stumbling, weary souls inspired anew
To climb the hills,—this holy man who thrilled
A million men with love of better things,
Who sowed the seeds of flowering thought that filled
The happy gardens of the world, where sings
The mated bird, and where the rippling streams
Of children's laughter and the soft low breath
Of maidens' vows have peopled poets' dreams
Of immortality, of life and death,—
This brave and tender man who never wronged
The least of any race, who fought for right,
Who loved the world, abhorred the myths that throng
With devils, saints, and gods and creeds of might,—
This saner, sweeter, nobler Christ is blest;
For, whether souls live on or starless night
Enfolds, we know dear Robert is carest
By dreamless sleep, or lives—a Prince of Light.

WALT WHITMAN

He gave his wealth to the summer air
As a spendthrift flower its perfume rare.
He knew not what was discontent,
For he worshipped the god of abandonment.

He walked the daisied fields of God
Dreaming the dreams new-born of the sod.
And beings that breathed where his footsteps bent
Somehow breathed, too, of abandonment.

He sang old songs of the world when new
That in some sweet way were as fresh as the dew;
And he laughed as he drank the happy air,
As a child might laugh in a rocking-chair.

He kissed his hand to a mocking-bird,
And the dear thing sang, as I never heard,
Some wayward strain of wild content
That thrilled its mate with abandonment.

He bared his breast to the winsome breeze,
With half-shut eyes gazed long at the trees
That, shading the lazy river's brim,
Stopped in their gossip to bow at him.

With the pink lips close of a shell to his ear
He listened long, and seemed to hear
The song of the sea as it kissed the shore,
While his deep eyes drank in a world or more.

And he faded away from the sight of men;
But the trees, I guess, have seen him again,
And the mocking-birds and flowers and grass,
The sod and breeze, have seen him pass.

For his wondrous ways of abandonment,
His wealth of ways and sweet content,
Live on in the love of bird and breeze,
In flowering things and brooks and trees.

And I sometimes think, when the sun hangs low
And revels in painting the clouds aglow,
That he speaks to me with his wistful eyes
Of abandonment in the wine-spilt skies.

BEAUTY'S SLAVE

Oh, let me be thy taper, love,
  And for thy beauty burn!
I care not where your glorious eyes
  In rapturous love may turn,
If only I may lay myself
  In wanton waste to you;
Your breasts of snow may still be snow
  If passion burn them through.

Your heart of snow may still be snow
  If I, a coal, may lie
Upon your bosoms white at night,
  And glow and burn and die.
I care not where your glorious eyes
  In rapturous love may turn,
If I may be thy taper, love,
  And thou thy taper's urn.

BIRTHDAY BLOSSOMS

(SEPTEMBER 16, .)

The years are fair and fleet,
With every year a blossom
And every blossom sweet.

Thy life first dropped its rootlets in the garden of a dream;
The garden smiled a welcome, and the welcome, it would seem,
Each year put forth a blossom, and each year the blossom grows
More sweet with each September as the blossom blooms a rose.

And love was in the sunlight when thy life was just begun;
And beauty wooed its blossoms as the years fled, one by one,
Until the bud and blossom met in mild September haze,
When beauty dreamt of kisses, kisses blossomed into days.

And thus in mild September, when the year is downward bent,
The blossom of thy beauty, with the bloom that love has lent,
Is blown to saintly sweetness in the soft September haze,
In token of the memory-buds that mark thy natal days.

May all thy days be roses with their petals velvet-gowned;
May all-to-come Septembers find thee fair as this has found;
May life and love and beauty make unceasing union here,
Until the roses faint with joy and time is brown and sere!

A SONG OF THE SUN AND DEW

If I were the sun and you were the dew,
Each morn as the world lay asleep,
Now can't you guess what I would do
If I were the sun and you were the dew
And the old world half asleep?

I'd draw you away from the arms of day,
And take you along with me;
And fold you close as a rosebud tight,
And set you down on the shores of night,
And put you to sleep by a sombre sea,
Watched by the eyes of the starry skies,
Kissed by the breezes soft and low,—
Kissed and kept till the morning glow
Should give you back to me.

So, if I were the sun and you were the dew,
Each morn as the world lay asleep,
Now can't you guess what I would do
If I were the sun and you were the dew
And the old world half asleep?

MY HELEN'S EYES

Where Georgia uplands touch the skies,
  Now gray with clouds and clinging mist;
Where changing beauty never dies
  On red hills warm and purple-kissed;

Where oak and pine hold strong domain,
  With leaf and vine aglow with dreams
Of semi-tropic tempered rain,
  That bursts in song from fretted streams;

Where cabins peep from cotton fields,
  Or sheltered meads that house the quail,
Where summer lingers, loves and shields
  The nursling shoots of hill and vale;

Where dancing fairies tame the air,
  Till every little breeze that blows
Holds in its heart, like gloom of hair,
  Some mystery that beauty knows,—

I linger yet, while Memory holds
  Her longing face averted-wise
To southward where deep browns and golds
  Are wedded in my Helen's eyes.

SONG OF A STARLING

An inspiration golden
  Came with me to dwell,
Dainty as a sunbeam
  In a lily-bell,—
Dainty as a sunbeam,
  Dearest thing I knew!
But, oh, it was crushed, love,
  'Neath the heel of you.

Precious little tempter!
  Your trysting-place and trust
A darling little woman
  Has trampled in the dust.
You fell before her lifeless,
  Because the words she said
Had chilled my dainty starling
  Until its life had fled.

I laid you on her bosom
  Of bare and billowed white;
But the soul of you had perished
  In the mystery of night.
Her thrill, though warm and woosome,
  My agony and pain,
Could ne'er recall your spirit
  To that which she had slain.

My eager arms are empty;
  My woful heart would break,—
I call thee tender names, love,
  Ten thousand for her sake!

My whispers woo thee nightly:
  They haunt the smiling shore,
When, dreaming for a moment,
  You live with us once more.

But, oh, my flitting fancy,
  Dear angel sprite of soul!
You fled beyond my vision
  Of utter hope and goal.
I linger weary, waiting,
  And watching through my tears,
With burning blindness yearning
  For thee, my love of years.

Why bear this grim "forever,"
  This bite of grief sublime,
When never star-babe blesses
  Again my tired time
With e'er again another,
  Nor little beam of light
From constellated musings
  Where sits the sable Night?

An inspiration golden
  Came with me to dwell,
Dainty as a sunbeam
  In a lily-bell,—
Dainty as a moonbeam
  Dancing in the dew!
But, oh, it was crushed, love,
  'Neath the heel of you.

KISSES

The lips that I have kissed with heat
  Are red with blood and bee-stung yet:
My loves have found no grave so sweet
  As this,—to love and then forget.

I have no flesh-loves under ground,—
  No gaunt remorse comes back to turn
My passion-songs to plaintive sound,
  Where cypress creeps among the fern.

When scarlet fades from lips that swelled
  When my lips pressed them close and long,
And dusts of earth fill eyes that held
  The mystic light of starry song,

I know how joyless day shall be,
  How all the night's uncertain gloom
Shall throng with doubts to menace me,
  And memories which crowd the tomb.

And so I laugh and laugh; and yet—
  I dream sometimes my love is dead,
When not a thing lets me forget
  The least she did, the least she said.

And there within the folds of sleep
  My soul doth seek the opiate-clod
Where she each night hath flowers to keep
  Sweet kisses moist upon the sod.

Her dew-wet kisses eve and dawn,
  Where phantom daisies droop and nod,
In mystery of dreams have drawn
  Some tender magic down from God.

LATE SUMMER

Large were her breasts, and in her eyes
  Dwelt the memories of other days,—
Dream-spun ghosts 'neath Italian skies,
  Fleecy clouds and a changing haze
Of dead love's longing, and a dead love's vow.

Full and shapely lay her lips
  In sad repose that was half a smile,
And generous curves threw no eclipse
  On passion too plaintive to make denial
From dimple of foot to placid brow.

Threads of gray in her soft brown hair
  Quickened my love for her ripened wealth
Of womanly beauty, and I declare
  My heart fell prey to a subtle stealth,
That her bated beauty holds even now.

A HANDFUL OF CLOVER

There's a blood-red fleck on my lady's breast,
  And a sea of night in my lady's eyes,
And coral tips of the clover rest
  Too close to the flesh that I covet and prize.

There's a beautiful world where my lady breathes,
  There's Egyptian wealth in her hair of night,
And the pale pink clover binds and wreathes
  A brow as fair as the soul of light.

So I dream of her lips, and the ruby red
  That an angel left on her fair fine breast,
Till my heart must speak, though my soul hath said
  It envies the clover she kissed and pressed.

EVEN SO

  Your flame of love burns low, my pet.
The twilight's dawn and night's high noon
  Have drowsed away, I know, and yet—
I mourn your loss of love so soon.

  Perchance some newer taper burns
The moth-wings of your soul, my pet;
  For love like yours laughs once and turns
Where even dagger-points forget.

  Your love hath rode the heights, my pet,
Bare-back astride some bat of night;
  And you have thought well to forget
Our crimson crush of love at sight.

  Your love hath sounded all the deeps,
But not as eagles cleave the air;
  And yet the slimy lizard creeps
Perhaps to caves you did not dare.

Your love hath known of forests dark,
And not where holy trees find breath,
But down the gulfs where mushrooms stark
Uplift their pallid stems of death.

I mourn your loss of love, my pet;
I mourn for your poor crippled wings.
For I—well, I must needs forget
The tarnished hope of changing things.

A LOVE-QUEEN

Tall as stately lilies grow,
My Queen is all that queens may be.
And dreams that sleeping poppies know
Live in her eyes and speak to me
Of all that passion dares to paint
Upon the canvas of the soul.

Black as night when star-eyes sleep,
My lady's hair hangs low and lies
In witching curls where fairies keep
Their watch and ward; and mine own eyes
That wander free from all restraint
Drink deep where blue-veined billows roll.

Ample breasts of snow and fire,
And waist and hips of more than grace!
My lady holds my fierce desire
In thrall with her Madonna face,

Till I could die for beauty's sake,
  Or live where her red roses blow.

Dear and sweet is love's caress:
  The touch of her small hand to me
Is like the kiss of flowers that bless
  Some vagrant breeze just off the sea;
Or, like the dews to plants half-wake
  Ere eastern skies begin to glow.

ONE CLINGING HOUR

  In dim Swiss valleys sweet with hay
New-made by peasant girls I spent
  Some early blushes. Life's red day
Unwound itself from night, and lent
  The purple-poppied love to sing
And soothe. The new-mown hay was blent
  With shadows; and on happy wing
The mated bird wooed blithe content.

  And, lo! between the cool white peaks
I measured all my world, and found
  For one short summer day the cheeks
That told their blushes to the ground
  As eager flags of flame unfurled
A mute desire in mine. No sound
  Profaned the clinging hour. Earth hurled
Itself away, and we were bound.

KATHLEEN

My love to her is like some fairy gown:
  She puts it on when skies are blue, and earth,
  A dimpled babe of heaven, smiles,—when mirth
And golden pleasure, as a jaunty crown
Upon her brow, have made her quite the queen,—
A careless mistress she, my fair Kathleen!

My love she holds it well to don and doff,
  Is proud to know that it is all her own,
  Yet lightly deems it as a thistle blown
Across some sunny lawn,—a thing to scoff,
Or trifling toy put by and left unseen
When break the sober dawns on fair Kathleen.

She wears my love as maidens wear a rose:
  To-night it nestles near her proud heart-beat,
  At dawn its petals lie where her white feet
Shall pass and crush them 'neath their magic snows
With cruel scorn, as all the world has seen
Her hapless lovers crushed by fair Kathleen.

REQUITAL

I sought in dreams a Princess dear to me:
  I wandered where the wind's soft whispers told
  Sweet grass and trees of her;
I questioned all the colors,—flower and tree,

And tangent kiss of sun that flooded them
With beauty's apothegm
Of her dark hair and eyes.
Yet she eluded me as shadows run
Before the eager face of wooing sun
When white clouds fleck the skies.

Not till morning almost touched the noon
With fervent kiss, did I behold my love,
Whose hair was night, whose eyes
Of liquid darkness made my hot blood swoon
With such delicious things that, all aglow,
I marvelled at the snow
Of her too perfect breast.
Now is she come, and, like each perfect thing,
Brings pain with overjoy. And so I fling
In air my heart's behest.

A ROSE SONG

O dark red rose, O blood-red rose,
O flower to my fancy wed!
I wonder if your mistress knows
The tears that we have shed?

You nestle where her hands have placed
Your bursting heart to mine,
Where every beat lies love-encased
As leaves fold over thine.

O dear red rose, O deep dark rose,
I wonder if there be
One little pang your mistress knows
Since you have died for me?

Alone you grew, and wooing breeze
Embraced your fragrant breath.
Her dainty hand recked not of these,
Nor of your love-lorn death.

Nor weep, dear rose, but sleep, red rose,
And dream of her dusky eyes.
Pray God, red rose, that your mistress knows
The flames you symbolize.

NIGHT IN THE PARK

Bright and far were holy stars,
Dark and near the shadows stood,
Red as blood the planet Mars,—
Brooding night was on the wood.

Soft as stealing shadows move,
Gentle as the cradled boat,
Girdling, clasped the arms of love,
Trembling kisses sought her throat.

Starry dancers tripped the lake,
Hushed the whispers of the dark,
Love and Life were half awake,
Half asleep in Forest Park.

While the drowsy curtains fell,
  And the lazy moon was late,
Who shall speak, and who may tell
  Of the endless ways of fate?

Gentle Christ! the waters kissed,
  Soft as love, the leaning grass;
Did we gain, or have we missed,
  Something that in whispers pass?

Lovers face an endless guess:
  Which is wrong and what is right?
Still I hold it well to bless
  All the ways of fate that night.

VIOLETS

In a garden of old Verona,
  Where tender violets grow,
I walked with a queenly woman;
  And I would that she might know
My heart was aflame with passion
  That glad and golden hour,
When I plucked the purple blossom —
  And she folded away the flower.

A SMILE OF AUTUMN

Wan autumn lights are sighing on the hills,
The harvest fields are sad and shorn,

There is no music in the solemn rills,
  And only a harsh murmur in the fields of corn.

But in her fawn-brown eyes that follow me
  No sadness lurks nor tearful thought:
All melody of earth and sky and sea
  Lives in the magic spell that she has wrought.

Thus all the seasons' change to me doth seem
  Unlike the fitful, moody years,
But rather like some ever-changing dream
  Of joy that never knew the salt of tears.

There is not any grief and no regret
  In this dear boon that blesses me;
No little thing my heart would fain forget
  In all the mystic depths of Love's great sea.

LOVE'S STAR

My love is sweet as some dear flower,
  That dreams of dawn and dew;
And pure as chimes that fairies ring
From blossoms blithe and bloom of spring,
  When dusk is in the hour
  And grass is green and new.

I dream amazed of days that were
  Before my love was mine;
And wonder why we dwelt apart,

Two souls with but a single heart
And that heart all with her,
And she all but divine.
But, when I think how pure and white
Her soul is on the earth,
I wonder not, but marvel why
A mortal won a star from sky,
Ablaze with love and light
For one so poor in worth.

A MAN'S MARVEL

O love, thy heart is whiter than the white snow
Of frost-bloom down the air.
Dear heart, thy breath is sweeter than soft June sighs,
When all the world is fair.

O love, thy brow slopes up to God,
Thine arms reach down to me.
Thou art the sun, and I the sod
A-blossom under thee.

O love, thy soul more perfect is than dreams are
When my glad heart leaps to thine.
Dear one, I love thee deeply,—more than man loves
The something deemed divine.

O love, thine eyes light all the skies:
I marvel that for me
They bend their beams all mercy-wise
To earth where mortals be.

SIXTEEN

Ventre-Saint gris!

(HENRY IV. AND CHARLOTTE MARGUERITE DE MONTMORENCY)

With two-step lilt she skims the street:
  She walks with dreamland graces yet;
And all the while her musicked feet
  Keep time my soul would fain forget.

I cannot choose but follow there,
  With old-time odors over me,
Where trails her burnished noon of hair,—
  A breath of dainty subtlety.

Her laughing words assail my ears,
  And set aflame dead-leaf desires;
While Maytime mist upfloats in tears,
  And dim-eyed ashes dream of fires.

To walk again the pansied path,
  Forget the lessons love has taught,
I would defy the direst wrath
  That ever man or demon wrought.

Old Spider Time enmeshes me,
  And rime of years has robbed my hair
Of all the golden mystery
  That used to dance and shimmer there.

Ah you, O maid of poppy bloom
And lily's dower of sinless hue!
I loathe to think that at his loom
The gray old Spider spins for you.

FATE

Thou art a cunning tide that sneaks and crawls
From out the hungry horror of the night;
Or like a maddened fury in thy might,
Tormented by the moon and sharp sea-squalls.

Within thy depths a black heart laughs at woe,
And mocks with glee thy victim's gasping breath
Ere mangled life and hope are one in death,
Or drowned ambition lies a corpse below.

I see thy shadowy fingers crook and reach:
I hear thee screech where scattered waifs are cast
Along the shore of days now overpast,—
Along gray reefs and on the pounding beach.

I know thy subtle ways of hidden snares
That lure the soul some pleasant path to take,
And where thy thousand seemly whispers make
Ten thousand dangers worse for him who fares.

But my defiant soul hath scorn for thee:
If grief shall break my heart, I answer yet,
I have a heart to break! and can forget
The stones that bruise, the hunger pressing me.

I have the will to look between thine eyes.
If thou art Master, I at least can be
As fearless as the spirit blessing me
With conscious trust in all things 'neath the skies.

Erect my soul shall stand forefronting thee,—
Exulting strength that dares thy sternest might;
All unafraid to face the blackest night
That e'er was filled with threats on land or sea.

If fortune fail me, let her go and stay!
My soul from all that is came forth entire,
To all that is with calm faith can retire,
Enrobed for rest or armored for the fray.

So, if my soul shall journey on and grow
More perfect, then have I no cause to fear;
And if it melts, dissolves like dead leaves sere,
Then thou canst never harm it,—that I know.

A BALLAD OF CHANGE

There stood along the king's highway
A stolid house hard-by;
The eaves were sloping low between
Two willows spreading high;
White lilacs in the dooryard bloomed,
With tiger-lilies nigh.

Tall locust-trees stood on the left,
A lane ran down the right;

Behind, the smiling garden crept
To foaming orchards white.
  And all around the spacious ground
Were fireflies at night.

Beyond the orchard flowed a stream
  With chestnuts on the bank;
Beneath them slender violets grew,
  Below them cattle drank.
And over all was sun by day,
  At night the dews were dank.

The dews were dank at early morn;
  At morn the roses seemed
To blush with modesty because
  So many jewels gleamed.
The hollyhocks demurely stood
  But half awake, and dreamed.

The spreading currant bushes low
  Were coral-gemmed between
The berry vines and jessamines
  And dahlias' leaves of green.
While bleeding-hearts beside them grew,—
  The reddest I have seen.

The cypress cooled the corner-stone,
  A juniper the door;
A grape-vine climbed its trellis near,
  While on the whitened floor
No carpet lay, but in its stead
  A home-made rug or more.

Across the lane, upon a hill
  Tall poplars pierced the sky;
And purple lilacs grew between
  Green plats and fir-trees high.
And, just below, a dark cave slipped
  'Neath rocks where waters lie.

A cherry-tree with vines o'erlaced,
  Gave shelter from the sun
To garden walk that met the spring
  Where coolest waters run,
Behind the pear-trees, through the lot
  Where clover leaves are spun.

And here within this happy world
  A child was used to roam:
He played with flowers beneath the trees
  That touched the azure dome.
He loved the field of clover bloom
  Where wild bees built their home.

He watched the fireflies in the field,
  The bright stars overhead.
He questioned all the flowers if *they*
  Had guessed why some were red?
He guessed that some were red with blood,
  That human hearts had shed.

. . . . . .

Now things no longer are the same.
  The stolid house lies low;

Its very ashes ceased to be
  Since tall weeds came to grow.
And all around the precious ground
  Are things he does not know.

He does not know the little bowers
  That housed his dreams by day;
He sees no fairies in the leaves
  Where fairies were alway.
He only sees a wretched place
  Where mean things crawl and stay.

All friendliness has left the things
  That grow there or decay,
And everywhere a menace prowls
  Where once were nymphs of day.
Now only dole is in his soul
  That once knew how to pray.

And wherefore all this change, I trow,
  No mortal yet has told:
It seems to come with passing years,
  And bitterness of gold,—
The dregs of years and stains of tears
  That make the heart grow cold.

O Lord, we know how sad it is
  That these sad things should be
On either side as waters glide
  Forever toward the sea;
When stars, alas! are broken glass
  Of shattered memory.

DOUBT

I walk amid the maze of life,
  At home and yet alone.
The tooth of hate, the god of strife,
  The human hearts of stone,
And all the terrors teeming round
Make me distrust the solid ground.

The piles that human corals build,
  And dens the spiders weave;
The dirty streets with hunger filled,
  And hearts that beat to grieve;
And all the waste of blood and tears,—
Besiege and fill my soul with fears.

I walk the dusty ways of trade,
  And breathe the breath of gain,
And see life's roses pale and fade
  Beneath a needless pain,
Until my very soul derides
The faith that love on earth abides.

I wonder why the martyrs died,
  And why the heroes bled;
How any grave scarce three feet wide
  Can hold some pompous dead;
And why a church proclaims its creed
As clutching tradesmen voice their greed?

GOD

There is no little thing in all this world
  Forgot by thee, O Soul supreme and sweet.
Thy mercy shows itself when storms have hurled
  Their fury at the stars beneath thy feet.
    I read the sign, and know;
For little flowers burst in fragrant love
  And smile upon the air which vengeance rode
In thundering car drawn by the steeds of Jove
  When gloomy Titans stormed the gods' abode
    One little hour ago.

LIFE

The years are a song
  Of laughs and cries;
And love is a long,
  Sweet, tireless flight,
Of dear unrest
  On a breath of sighs,
With dreams at best
  On the shores of night.

ALONE

Our days were long as love, and happy seemed
All voices of the earth and sky and sea.
We knew no joy save what the other dreamed
Was good; and every wind that wandered free

A message lent of sweet-mouthed minstrelsy.
We sat beneath our vine when mid-day beamed
The sun, and yet, when fell the night's decree,
We lingered while the starlight on us streamed.
Then came the time when I must sit alone,
In depths far deeper than the circling sun
Has measured through the years that he hath flown.
And since that time the shadows one by one
Athwart my lonely life have deeper grown,
Enfolding me where hope is dead and done.

THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY

Between earth's darkling womb and quiet moon
No little straying thing is mean or small;
The least of these shall yet upreach to all,
And all shall bow to littleness full soon.
The rough old parent rocks are earth's sweet boon.
The voiceless trees have tongues with which to call;
And playful threads of moss-fringed waterfall
Have somehow found the fragment of a tune.
I look on men,—their souls are fair to me,—
And, though their lives in tangled courses run,
I love the very knots of life, and see
Of loop and kink a flower deftly spun.
In tear-born streams that seek the levelling sea,
I solve the sweetest problem of the sun.

Oh, the gloating in the gloaming and the never-ending pain;
And the whispers in the darkness, and the voices in the day—
And the vulture birds of midnight; and the plashing tears of rain;
And the moans of children dying, and the demon-men at play!

Oh, the hopelessness of watching, when the soul of hope is strong,
In the prison-house of waiting, which is worse than dumb despair;
For the demon-claw is tearing, while the mocking laugh of Wrong
Through the outer world of murder fills the inner heart with care.

Oh, the gnashing and the clashing of the fangs of horrid Hate!
And the poison in the playing and the preying greed of gain;
And the hungry babes at twilight, and the coffin at the gate,
And the lighted halls of laughter near benighted dens of pain!

Oh, the loving of the martyrs who had souls of spotless white!

Oh, the labors of the loving who were toilers grim and brave!
They have sown the seed at seed-time in the darkling fields of night;
And their tear-wet, weary sowing blossoms now above their grave.

WAR

The Pestilence of Years

In the graveyard of the nations, in the trenches of the slain,
In the lurid smoke of battle, in the steel and leaden rain,
In the blood of butchered heroes and in needless moans and tears,
Live the ghosts of cruel ages and the pestilence of years.

What is all this grim disorder, all this savagery of men
With their mighty, murderous engines belching fire and hell again?
But the madness of the rulers, and the selfish greed of gain,
And of craven monsters feeding on the bleeding hearts of pain.

Oh, the children born of women, with their tenderness and tears,

Must they turn to beasts of murder at the putting on
of years?
Or is madness of the rulers, and the lust of cruel gain,
But the demon-ghosts that wander where the trenches
scar the plain?

What means all this waste of treasure, all the seas of
blood and tears,
Spendthrift children spill through ages in the seething
tide of years?
Is it to assuage some monster, drunk with blood of
babes and men,
Reeling through the halls of pleasure, laughs and
then must drink again?

O ye babes of winsome women, nursed too kindly
at the breast,
Would ye turn the fangs of hatred on your brothers,
like caressed?
Have ye had no dreams of mercy, have ye known no
pity's tears?
Will ye never heed Love's teaching through the red
and crazy years?

A CRY OF THE SOUL

(*With Compliments to the greatest living Poet*)

O Love, with thy infinite sorrows;
O Life, so tenacious and strong;
O yesterday's warp in to-morrow's
Red woof of the blossoming song;

O yesterday's warp in to-morrow's
  Gray woof of the ultimate wail,—
O Love, with thy infinite sorrows,
  And Life's one monotonous tale.

We drink from thy cup, which is golden,
  The draught of the vintage of years,
Unholy as sins that are olden,
  More bitter than bittermost tears,—
The love that is fettered with longings,
  With longings it fain would conceal,
Denials that wrest the belongings
  From hands in perpetual appeal.

Thy bruises that mangle, the bleeding
  Red lips of the wounds that are torn,
Reopened again with mute pleading
  And answered with insolent scorn.
We turn to the infinite changes,
  From altars where vainly we sued,
While pallid unrest re-arranges
  The fragments of life's plenitude.

We marry, and turn to discover
  On lips and in eyes new delight.
The woman may reach for her lover
  Fair arms that embrace only night.
Impossible kisses redouble
  Desire bursting out into flame
From bondage that yokes us to trouble
  And trouble that ties us to shame.

O hunger that feeds on emotion,
  O seas of unbearable things,
O endless and changing devotion,
  That shrinks from the arrows and stings
Of monsters, mismated immortals,
  Whose eyelids grin jealous, green fire,—
Like unto bane serpents through portals
  Of hell when its heart is desire!

O Love, have you crowns of dear roses?
  O Life, be there other than pain?
O Death, is thy dream what encloses
  From harm the quick soul of the slain?
Is Sorrow the twin that embraces,
  With kisses, her sister Delight?
Does blood that is broken leave traces
  Like tears on the face in the night?

We ask, and the answer is only
  An echo that mocks our despair.
We stumble through days that are lonely,
  Face nights that seem come to ensnare
Our souls for the wanton, fierce pleasure,
  Of torture and fiendish delight.
O Life, does thy cruelty measure
  The blackness of ultimate night?

THE ABSOLUTE

Faces fade and ears forget,
  Voices lose the soul of song,
Memory strays while even yet
  Echoes linger sweet and long.

Fading, winding out of sight
  Through the changing scenes of day,
Dear warm spirits of delight
  Colder, dimmer grow alway.

Pearls of pleasure, rubies red,
  Trinkets of an idle hour,
Coronal for regal head,
  Soon are spent as blush of flower.

Love alone, a changeless star,
  Braves the fickle mortal years;
Beams in fadeless glory, far
  Down the world adrift in tears.

FALSE FAME

Up from the portals of the Night he came;
Down from the brow of Dawn to heart of Noon.
His footsteps sped where flowers, half a-swoon,
Bent low before his eager flight for Fame:
Fleet-foot his race despoiled their souls' acclaim.
Now golden-girdled Day doth envy Moon
Of midnight, and the tawny twilight's boon;

Yet frowning Fame hath blotted out his name.
Thus Fame was false; and cruel all the ways
The great brute world in sordid pomp has trod.
The soul is lost that wastes the freer days
Of woodsong, mirth, and stream-kissed flowers and sod,—
The courted world a courtesan that slays
The children of the brain, beloved of God.

ON SLIDING GROUND

We linger over old wine,
  We tarry where our pleasure tempts.
With ruthless hand we tear the vine
  That feeds us, in our large attempts
To reach beyond the dead plane
  That, desert-wise, afar and 'round
Drinks up our strength. In vain, in vain!
  Our feet are set on sliding ground.

Oh, chide us not! we all must fall
Sometime, somewhere. Forgive us all!

We tease and coax the tame laugh,
  We try to piece-out pleasure spent.
With deathless thirst we quaff and quaff,
  And feed our want on discontent.
And so, beyond and yet near,
  Almost in reach, just out of grasp,

We vaguely clutch through cheer and fear
  At dim desire with empty clasp.

O mortal brother, chide us not!
For Fate was blind when God forgot.

MY SOUL AWAKES

My soul awakes,—my soul that slept
  Until thy trembling pulse was mine,—
  Soft slumbers slowly disentwine
My spirit. Dear, my soul has wept,
  A-dreaming, misty tears that wet
The lashes merely. Now to thine
  My lips put forth, nor fain forget,
Thy kisses are my bread and wine.

I hear the roaring traffic swell
  Along the ridge and through the glen,
  And all the mighty hum of men,
As noble bees' where flowers dwell.
  My being thrills! my soul awakes!
The harp of love is taut in tune;
  And all my spirit's passion takes
Its music from the pulse of June.

For I have seen your wondrous eyes,
  Like woodland pools dark-fringed with fern,
  And felt their earnest glances burn
Like mid-day suns from tropic skies.
  Thy whispers woo my soul from me;

And all my being's tide doth flow
Where necklaced arms enfold unfree,
Two waking spirits white as snow.

THE WEST WIND

O mild, mild West Wind that hails the even-tide!
Have you no whispers from my love, no hope for hope denied?
Whence grasses bend to softest breath, and linger dew-spilled tears,
Brought you no whispers from her rest, no smile to woo my years?

O wild, wild West Wind, go screaming through the sky!
I hear your mocking clamor-voice, your demon-throated cry.
Across the night's uncertain face streams inky black your hair.
Ah, God! that such as this could be! my love—she was so fair!

THE SOUL'S HARKBACK

Now, from the vantage of man's high estate,
I long to turn again to humbler things,—
The vintage of the morn in bowers, where sate
Freeborn all joys of soul the body sings,—
Turn back again to where the perfumed leaf

Falls from the swaying censers of the field,
And breath of dawn rings flower-bells' relief
From human hurts no scars have healed.

In dreams I turn and tarry long and long:
The purring tiger-mother kittened lies,
And seems so like embodiment of song
I lose all fear in spell of her fierce eyes.
Within her lair the dear first-virtues spring
That, winged with poesy, enrich and robe
Each happy pair, and tell the soul to sing
And love-engarland all the globe.

I turn from men, from weariness and wrong,
From cankering care and pride and prickly fret,
And fain embrace again the woodland song,
And thus drowse back a step, and so forget,—
Forget that ever slave was born or bred,
That ever man by man was ridden down,
Aye, e'en forget the unforgotten dead
If babes could know no tear nor frown.

Perhaps the soul may turn upon high crest
And beat an ebb-tide dream through ways of past;
Perchance the goal lies hidden in the breast
Of some dim day; and heart find hope at last
By turning back to ancient dawn, when first
The budding fancy felt the dear, warm breath
Of waking love, ere creed and crime had curst
The sons of men with hate and death.

Mine eyes were glad to look upon my love.
To touch her cheek enkindled flames in mine,—
Sweet red flames above
All thought, save when lovers' arms entwine
In dreamy gardens where winds whisper low,
Making soft hours 'mong glad green leaves and bloom
Of subtle colorings, and flow
Of waters tuned with evening's earliest gloom.

My heart leapt joyously to kiss the cup
That was her bosom, carved for this sweet grace,
This inimitable sup.
Adown, her spilling beauty, pure as her face,
Carried my being with it rapturously,
As slipping sea-waves slide upon the sands.
All this and more was she to me,
For she held a world of beauty in her two hands.

My soul's deep consciousness was eddying dreams
That lived in the rare beauty of her eyes,
Now sharp as eagle-screams,
Now soft as moonlight is just when it dies
In the heart of a red rose some scant hours blown,—
Eyes of such quiet laughter as one sees
In summer meadows, color sown,
Where lurks ungathered honey for hungry bees.

And my Desire grew strong upon her lips,
Feeding on kisses, breathing fragrant sighs,—

In her glad mouth's ellipse
Finding joyousness; nor any wise
Did my desire grow less, where flowers spread
For kisses moist, and smiling pink leaves cleft
Asunder when a red heart bled
For joy at the young god's accustomed theft.

I saw her blood's increase like ears of corn,—
Strange fruitage torn when ripe from 'neath her heart.
How good God was that morn!
And all the ways of life too sweet to part
With fruit or flower, or glint of sun on leaf.
Not time, but thoughts outflowing counted years.
And then gray phantoms of old grief
Stood out against the sky aflood with tears.

THE NEGRO

You are weary, O Brother, my Brother!
  You are tired of your burdens, I know;
While the high human hopes you must smother,
  Are phantoms that go where you go.

You have worn your chains like the sainted;
  You were patient with thankless toil,
And your brave heart never once fainted
  'Neath the lash as you bent to the soil.

You have suffered red sins that are nameless,
  With the meekness of Christ on your face;

You have fed your indolent, shameless,
White master with the blood of your race.

You have given,—you are giving unceasing,—
You are giving what the good God keeps.
And the gifts of your toil are increasing
The white man's store while he sleeps.

You work in the dear world's gardens,
You grind in its dusty mills;
And your wage is the coin that hardens
The heart,—starves it and kills.

Though the chains that were cruel are broken,
Yet thy spirit in bondage dwells
Apart from the world and unspoken,
Where the tide of its glory swells—

Aye, dwells apart and unspoken
And mercilessly thrust aside!
It is bowed, by God! but unbroken,
For thy soul, it shall not be denied!

UNITED

I dream my dreams at scarlet-time
Of love's lone hour; my flag of soul
Is free upon the breath of rime,
As flesh is fond of uncontrol.

A pinch of snuff, a puff of smoke
That kissed the fresh, unravished bowl

Of meerschaum pipe! my soul awoke
To its own beauty, brave and whole.

A conscious breath, a thrill of speed
And power! my flesh awoke, and won
Companionship to sup with need,—
And then my flesh and soul were one.

DREAMS

From what dim corners of the brain they come
I know not. Dreams are folk that ask not leave
Of you or me. Unwelcome guests are some;
And others, dear delights that spin and weave
The fabric hope, and play at love and sling
Bright arrows through a trembling mark that bleeds,
Then flit away from lonesome arms that cling
To clay and crumbling ashes. Life thus leads
A never-ending chase with dream-desire,
Until they both are lost 'mid stars of fire.

And yet maybe the dream-folk live and dream
Their own delights, and feed some frowning guests
From sore unwilling hearts, and smile and seem
To drink the wine of joy from dark behests.
And still beyond, where fancy's faintest cloud
Scarce dims the azure dome of dreams, the bird
Of song may brood her dream-eggs, love endowed
With fairy notes that happy flowers heard
Of beauty's many echoes down the breeze,
A-dance where blossoms foam the green of trees.

YESTERDAY

The skies are blue; the ruddy South,
So loath of change, seems not to care
If Autumn waits and Winter's mouth
Whispers white love where limbs are bare.

Here in the lazy breathing-spell,
The aftermath of passion's heat,
She listens as the red leaves tell
Of the Year's spent love, so honey-sweet.

She dreams again of his sweet hot breath;
Her scarlet cheek alone betrays
Her clinging dream through change and death,
While dim eyes fade in the purple haze.

O matron South, with maiden dreams,
Sing yet thy love's long roundelay,
Like mine, a song that faintly seems
The soul of a sacred yesterday!

DEAD-SEA FRUIT

He told Love's red-bead rosary many times
In many lands; and Love had answered all
The prayers his mad desire had made. His heart
Was not the sanctuary hearts should be
When souls seek prayer. His became still less
The harbor-house of sacredness. It came
To pass, that as the castle of his breast
Fell more and more to waste and ruinness,

The garden of his speech grew richer in
Sweet buds prophetic of the soul's dear bloom.
And sickly nature placed the blush of whole
And hearty joy upon his hollow flesh,—
A fit and seemly lord of love was he.

Poor fire flies seek the stars and perish in
The outer seas where darkness is, and cold
Of infinite despair, where star-eyes fade.
Poor moths seek flame and sacrifice their wings
Of joy on dazzling altar-pyres. What wonder, then,
That women weep and drown themselves with tears!

In careless wantonness he held his arms
Wide open, looked desire upon a dear
And untried woman's flesh. She gave her soul.
He took both flesh and soul to wife, yet could
Not be a husband to her soul. He felt
The impotence of sentiment, and filled
With fleshly dreams her need of matedness,
And hid the serpent, lust, beneath the leaves,—
The petalled kisses cold, but sweet,—and said,
"This joy, my dear, this sacred dream is love!"

But, like all love that is not love, the dream
Must die,—the serpent must be fed,—the leaves
All fade, and garbage lies where flowers lived.

One day in early autumn when the gold
Of mellow sunlight kissed most dreamily
Perfected fruit, she decked herself with best

Of all her jewels, put a rose within
Her gloomy hair, kissed him, and said, "Good-bye,
For I may not be back to luncheon, love."
He muttered: "So be it! I care not when
She comes!" And yet he watched her fade away
Far down the street, and thought, "How fair she is,
How graceful all her lines, how liltingly
She trips the street where vulgar feet have soiled
The very stones she treads upon!" He turned
Upon his world of books and soulless art,
And then forgot—forgot the blood and soul—
The rare divinity he'd sworn to love.

A preacher once in brutal fury spake:
"The clock of time hangs on the walls of Hell
And ticks, *too late, too late, too late, too late!*"

With wild, dishevelled hair and hot eyes fixed,
A mother wailing by a river-brim
Shrieked out her loss: "Too late! my babe is drowned!"

A mother-bird sat brooding where her love
In songful joy had builded downily.
The leaves all trembled with her thrill of woe
For her half-orphaned young.

A mangled corpse was brought
To one who knew but dreams of coldest art,
Who nursed a serpent colder still that fed
On flesh, and charmed away the soul,—grew fat
On dead love uninterred. Then love awoke,

And holy dreams bemoaned its loss. He knew
Too late the sacred worth of woman's love.

Speak not, O learned philosopher, again
Of Nature's trust and kindliness! She sows
The seeds with cruel hand and strikes the buds
To earth, and laughs to scorn the wounded rights
Denied of fruit by her all-giving hands.

DE PO' LI'L' CHIL'UN

De Win' dey is blowin' mighty col',
  En de po' li'l' chil'un is shiverin' in bed;
De las' pone er bread done eat up whol',
  En de chil'un's mammy is col' en dead.

En de po' li'l' chil'un des cry en cry,
  But I tells 'em fer to hush, er I whup 'em, sho!
Den dey axes fer dey mammy, by en by,
  But she ain't ercomin' home no mo', no mo'.

Oh, she's done gone erway, I say, I say,
  She's done laid erway in de groun';
En de Win' he growl en snarl en say,
  "Doan yuh heah dat mo'nful soun'?"

Mister Win', yo's pow'ful bad, I say,
  Toe de po' li'l' chil'un in de trundle-bed,
W'en dey mammy's done gone so fur erway,
  En dey po' ol' daddy cain't git no bread.

En de Win' des puff en blow en blow,
  Lack de black ol' Satan projectin' eroun';
En de po' li'l' chil'un is freezin', sho!
  En dey mammy gone ersleep in de hard col' groun'.

Oh, she's done gone erway, I say, I say,
  She's done laid erway in de groun';
En de Win' he growl en snarl en say,
  "Doan yuh heah dat mo'nful soun'?"
. . . . . .

But the wind went down at the break of day,
  And the snow at dawn lay deep and white;
And the dead babes there with their father lay
  In the keep and dreams of the night.

LEAVIN' GEORGY

I'm a-leavin' of ol' Georgy,
  Whar the climbin' muscadine
'Pears to have its arms aroun' me
  Like an ol' sweetheart o' mine.
An' the ol' train keeps a-pullin',
  While my heart is holdin' fast
To the dearest of all livin' things
  That life has yanked me past.

I'm a-leavin' of ol' Georgy,
  Whar the tend'rest green things grow,
Coddlin' like an' climbin' clostest
  To the warm red hills I know.

An' the ol' train keeps a-jerkin',
  An' my heart keeps yankin' back
Till it seems my soul is spillin'
  Of its life-blood down the track.

I'm a-leavin' of ol' Georgy,
  Whar the mockin'-birds an' trees
Is the truest frien's of fellers
  That a feller ever sees;
Whar the spears er grass is lovin'
  An' the blushin' roses flirt
With the meek an' droopin' lilies
  That have flounced the marshes' skirt.

I'm a-leavin' of ol' Georgy,
  An' I hate it awful bad,
Fer my dead dreams thar is sleepin'
  In the'r home that's still an' sad,—
In the little cabin peepin'
  Through the trees an' muscadines
Whar the breezes sigh so lonesome
  When the stars of midnight shines.

I'm a-leavin' of ol' Georgy,
  But I hain't got fur to go
Fer to find that I'm a-leavin'
  Of the dearest things I know.
Yet the ol' train keeps a-jerkin',
  An' my heart keeps yankin' back
Till between them they're a-spillin'
  Of my life-blood down the track.

GOIN' BACK TO GEORGY

I'm a-goin' back to Georgy,
  Whar the sweet pertaters grow,
An' the mockin'-birds is singin'
  To the dear warm hills I know,
Whar the melons stretch the'r bellies
  With the sweet juice of the dew,
An' the grape-vines' clustered laughter
  Fill an' thrill me through an' through.

I'm a-goin' back to Georgy,
  Fer to see that gal o' mine,
An' to bathe me in the sunshine,
  An' to pick the muscadine,
An' to spen' the year a-singin'
  An' a-lovin' of my dear,
Whar the berries burst a-drippin'
  Of a juicy kind o' cheer.

I'm a-goin' back to Georgy,
  Fer I've seen my frien's at Cleves
(Oh, the nearest an' the dearest
  That a feller ever leaves!)
An' my ol' heart chugs my win'-pipe
  An' my eyes is swimmin' tears,
While I clutch the hope to kiss 'em
  Once ag'in in smilin' years.

I'm a-goin' back to Georgy,
  An' my ol' heart aches anew,

Fer I'm leavin' of the Coopers,
  An' I love 'em so—I do—
That it seems my soul is splittin'
  As the ol' train pulls away,
An' my tremblin' hope is yearnin'
  Fer the'r kiss ag'in—some day!

I'm a-goin' back to Georgy,
  An' you'd reckon by my tears
I'm a weaklin'-like an' foolish
  In regards to dreads an' fears;
But I've seen so much of partin',
  An' I've knowed so much of tears,
That I can't help of my feelin's
  Of the heartlessness of years.

THE CROSS

Far down through mists of time and on the tide
That never turns, a spar with spikes of pain
Is kissed by billowed years and borne along.
The stains of tears are on it, virgins' blood
And much unholy crime which never wave
With ceaseless kiss nor floods may wash away.

The cross, a strangely simple image, tells
Of love and lust. It points, as God might with
His finger on the deeds of flesh and soul,
To meanings rich with purple, red with pain
Of many Christs. It was the first uplift
That told the mystic tale, now old as love.

WHEN DAY DROOPS

The big red sun is setting,
  The purple mist hangs low,—
The time of sweet forgetting,
  For love will have it so.

Whate'er the day was dreaming,
  Whate'er is left undone,
Fades now as fancy's seeming,
  And sinks with set of sun.

The gray now drooping lowly
  Along the far land's edge
Enshrouds the world as slowly
  As mists enfold the hedge.

The brooding twilight falling
  Calls home the dreams we know,—
Of joys past all recalling,
  Since sunset wills it so.

THE TRULY FREE

The truly free are those unknown to fame,—
  The careless souls who walk the ways of light,
  Thrice blessed with hope that hails the clearer sight,—
Content without the happy hosts' acclaim,—
The modest minstrels of the world who came
  Unbidden guests, to woo and win delight
  From simpler ways between the shores of night.

Nor thought to write on shifting sands—a name.
And so I open wide my arms to those
  Dear smiling wights of earth, who clearly see
In beauty's being cause that blooms the rose,—
  Embodied souls of song through ways that be
All-wise, because so meek that no man knows
  Their holy tears, nor yet how truly free.

LOVE'S LARGESS

From out fair moments of suppressed delight,
When joys, unburdened by a doubt, proclaim
A newer waking, comes a whispered name
As soft as even-shades subdued with light.
Beyond the clasp of touch or kiss of sight
Anon a dear face, mated with the name,
Consoles the spirit as a smile of fame
Broke in upon some dateless waste of night.
So from a love supremely full there be
Great largess,—subtle gifts of hope that are
More sacred than mere hollow fantasy,
Too sane to be mirages dim and fair;
And it were sweet of soul, it seems to me,
To hold them true and fixed as any star.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9–40*m*-7,'56(C790s4)444

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

PS Bell -
1085 Words of the
B423w wood

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 001 372 382 0

PS
1085
B423w